

137.

THREE SHORT

DISCOURSES

Leland ON *K*
THE DIVINE ATTRIBUTES,

THE HOLY SCRIPTURES,

AND

THE PROPER EMPLOYMENT OF THE
LORD'S DAY.

WITH

A SET OF FAMILY PRAYERS

Taken chiefly from the Liturgy.

*Trust ye in the Lord for ever: for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting
Strength. Isaiah xxvi. 4.*

Remark:

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THREE SHORT

DISCOURSES

OF

THE DIVINE ATTRIBUTES

THE HOLY SCRIPTURES

THE SACRAMENTS OF THE

CHURCH



A COLLECTION OF

THE SERMONS OF

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J. LELAND, D. D.

PSALM xxxvi. 7.

*How excellent is thy Loving-kindness, O God!
Therefore the Children of Men put their Trust
under the Shadow of thy Wings.*

THE holy Scripture not only supplies us with the noblest Subjects, that can be offered to our Contemplation, (namely) the glorious Perfections of the eternal God, His wonderful Works of Creation and Providence, but also acquaints us, that we ourselves are the Objects of His Care and Love;—that He, *whose Glory is above the Heavens*, beholds with kind Regard and tender Pity the frail Inhabitants of the Earth; and hath been pleased most graciously to declare, that, as many as obey His Laws, and serve him faithfully, *He will be their God and Father, their Support and Strength for ever.*

Of the Attributes (or Perfections) of God, that, which naturally engages our first Attention, is His Almighty Power. The vast and

stupendous Fabric of the Universe, which He created, and continually upholdeth, is the glorious Monument of His Omnipotency. *The invisible Things of Him, (saith the Apostle) even His eternal Power and Godhead, are clearly seen from the Creation of the World. And the Prophet Jeremiah saith, Behold, thou hast made the Heaven and the Earth by thy great Power and stretched-out Arm; and there is nothing too hard for thee.*

Since we are well assured that the great Creator is no less *good* than powerful, the Idea of His irresistible Power (which might have overwhelmed us with Terrour) becomes a natural Foundation of Delight and Joy. Being convinced that the unlimited Power of God is perpetually employed in maintaining the good Order of the World; supporting and protecting those, who obey His righteous Laws; and promoting their real Happiness; we have the utmost Reason *to rejoice in Him. The Eyes of the Lord, (saith the Psalmist) run to and fro throughout the Earth, to show Himself strong in the Behalf of those, whose Hearts are perfect towards Him. Trust ye in the Lord for ever,*

(saith the Prophet Isaiah) *for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting Strength.* He hath both the Power and the Will to do exceeding abundantly for us, more than we can ask or think.

Every Part of the wide Creation, that comes within our Notice, exhibiteth illustrious Marks of Divine Beneficence. *The Lord is good to all; and His tender Mercy is over all His Works. He provideth both for Man and Beast.* Accordingly (in the poetical Language of the Psalmist) the Brutes are represented as looking up to God, the common Parent of all, and expecting their Food from His bountiful Hand. But much more is His Goodness manifested towards the human Race. He hath made us a noble Order of Beings, endowed with wonderful Faculties, and capable of various exalted Pleasures. And, although in the present imperfect and sinful State of Mankind, many Sorrows fall to our Lot, still we can see numberless undoubted Tokens of the Goodness of God; and have such Experience of His Favour, as may well lead us to conclude, that He is no less kind and merciful in the Appointment of Afflictions, than when He showers down upon us His more immediate Blessings.

When we consider the glorious End, for which we are created ;—the immortal State of Perfection and Happiness, which we are capable of attaining to ; Wonder and Gratitude must fill our Hearts, and elevate our Souls. Inspired with such Hopes, we have indeed great Reason to rejoice. *Give Thanks unto the Lord, (saith the Psalmist) for He is good ;—for His Mercy endureth for ever. Because thy Loving-kindness is better than Life, therefore my Lips shall praise thee. Thus will I bless thee, whilst I live ; and will lift up my Hands in thy Name. Whom have I in Heaven, but thee ? and there is none upon Earth, that I desire, in Comparison of thee. How excellent is thy Loving-kindness, O God ! Therefore the Children of Men put their Trust under the Shadow of thy Wings. They shall be satisfied with the Fatness of thy House : and thou shalt make them drink of the River of thy Pleasures. In thy Presence is Fulness of Joy ; and at thy right Hand there are Pleasures for evermore.*

The Wisdom of God is infinite. He is called in the holy Scriptures the only wise : as if it were said, “ none can properly be called wise,

“but God.” He taketh in the whole Compass of Things, past present and future, at one all-comprehending View ; and knows, in every possible Circumstance, what is the best and fittest to be done. When we consider this perfect Wisdom, as ordering all Things for the universal Good ;—for the Happiness of every living Creature, according to its Nature ; not only is our Admiration excited, but lively Joy and Gratitude are awakened in every uncorrupted Heart.

Weak and ignorant as we are ; liable to various Errours and Misfortunes ; surrounded with Difficulties and Dangers ; what a comfortable Privilege it is, “to look up to the all-wise Governor of the World, the all-powerful Disposer of all Events !” Wicked Men may lay their Snares with great subtlety, as well as Malice. But *there is no Wisdom nor Counsel nor Understanding against the Lord. He disappointeth the Devices of the crafty, so that their Hand cannot perform their Enterprize. He taketh the wise in their own Craftiness.* It is a transporting Reflection to a good Mind, that, even when Things have the most disastrous

Appearance, infinite Wisdom is at the Helm, and directeth all Things, that come to pass ;— that God knows how to cause Good to arise out of Evil, and Order out of Confusion ; and can bring His excellent Designs into Effect by Methods transcending human Comprehension.— Safely therefore may the righteous *cast all their Cares on Him*. They may with Confidence look up to God, *to direct their Path*, in the most perplexing Circumstances. He will order all Things for them in the wisest and kindest Manner. *He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.*

God is called in Scripture *the holy one* ; and is described as being *glorious in Holiness*. *The Lord is righteous in all His Ways* (saith the Psalmist) *and holy in all His Works*. *His Work is perfect. All His Ways are Judgment and Truth*. It naturally gives us Pleasure to behold in an imperfect *human* Character a steady Love and Practice of Virtue, and a generous Abhorrence of Vice. For *Sin* is indeed the foulest Blemish and Deformity of our reasonable Nature ; and *Holiness* its true Beauty and Glory. And shall we not admire and adore the great Original of

Righteousness and Goodness?—in whom they are seen perfect and intire; and from whom every Excellency of all other Beings is derived.

When we contemplate the unspotted Glory of the Creator; when we consider the perfect Purity of His Nature; we cannot but be struck with an awful Reverence of such a Being: and might fear to approach Him, even with the Offerings most expressive of our Humility, if we had not been encouraged by the Knowledge of His condescending Kindness and Pity. But so great is His Goodness and Mercy towards us, that He hath promised to receive our humble Petitions for all necessary Help. He is ready to further every Beginning of Virtue and Holiness; and to assist with the blessed Influence of His Grace* our sincere Endeavours to observe His Laws, and to do His Will.

The righteous Lord loveth Righteousness. His Countenance beholdeth the upright. The great End of all His Dispensations towards us;—of the Laws, which He hath given us; and of His Covenant of Grace and Mercy; is, that we may be Partakers of His Holiness. This is the Will of

Luke xi. 13.

God, (saith St. Paul) even your Sanctification. Therefore what a good Man ardently aspires after, is to make a constant Progress in real Holiness of Heart and Life. And he looketh towards the heavenly State with peculiar Delight, because he shall there be free from all Defilement, and fixed for ever beyond the Reach of Temptation.

All created Beings are liable to change. The most perfect, if left to themselves, might fall from their Excellency. But God is unchangeable. He can never become less powerful wise or good. *With Him is no Variableness, nor Shadow of turning. The Counsel of the Lord standeth for ever (saith the Psalmist) and the Thoughts of His Heart unto all Generations.* How solid a Foundation is this, whereon to build our Trust!—On Him alone may the Mind, convinced of the Instability and Uncertainty of all earthly Things, safely repose, and enjoy the truest Rest. *Acquaint now thyself with God, (saith Job) and be at Peace.*

How wonderful and awful is it to reflect, that the Almighty filleth Heaven and Earth, and

every Part of the stupendous Universe, with His Presence! *In Him all live, and move, and have their Being.* This Consideration, which strikes the Wicked with Terrour and Perplexity, affords the utmost Consolation and Joy to the upright. A good Man may be banished from his House, his Friends, and his Country; but he cannot be banished from his God. The utmost Power of his Enemies cannot deprive him of His gracious Communications. God, *who is the Strength of his Heart*, standeth by him in all Adversities; and will convert his Sufferings into an Occasion of triumphant Joy hereafter. He may rejoice therefore in the Midst of Tribulation. And, as he truly fears to offend God, he needeth not to fear any other Power.

To conclude.—Most justly may they be called the Enemies of their own Peace and Joy, who seldom raise their Thoughts to God;—seldom or never contemplate His glorious Perfections; *nor consider the Wonders, that He hath done for the Children of Men.* That reasonable Creatures should be willing to forget the God, who made them, *and who daily poureth His Benefits upon them*, argues a sad Perverse-

ness and Corruption of Heart. Yet there are many, to whom that Description may be applied, which the Psalmist gives of the wicked Man, that *God is not in all his Thoughts. They live, as without God, in the World.* As little do they think of Him in the general Course of their Lives, as if there were no such Being. Or, if a Thought of God sometimes darts into their Mind, they give it no welcome Entertainment. They say unto God, *Depart from us: we desire not the Knowledge of thy Ways.* Thus they banish themselves from the Fountain of Life and Happiness. But the good Man will *delight himself in God.*—The boasted Pleasures of the Sensualist, the empty Pomp of Pride, and the momentary Possession of Riches, are contemptible indeed, when compared with the heartfelt Satisfaction of possessing the Approbation and Friendship of the Almighty. We are not called upon to serve God without Reward. We are told before-hand, and shall always find, that “His is the most profitable Service.” When we contemplate on God, and His Perfections, it is not like the Admiration of something great and excellent, in which we ourselves have no Interest. For it is *He*, who

gave us Life. And from *Him* all our Happiness must come. God hath endow'd us with a Capacity of discovering, admiring, and adoring, His glorious Attributes; and even of imitating His Goodness in our Behaviour to our Fellow-creatures. And the Voice of natural Reason, together with *His revealed Word*, conspire to teach us, that, *to fear God, and keep His Commandments*, is the Wisdom, Glory, and Happiness of Man.

BLESSED Lord, who hast caused all holy Scriptures to be written for our Learning, grant that we may in such wise hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that, by Patience, and Comfort of thy holy Word, we may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed Hope of everlasting Life, which thou hast given us in our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

ROMANS XV. 4.

That we, through Patience, and Comfort of the Scriptures, might have Hope.

*THE Design of the holy Scriptures is, to instruct us in the Knowledge of true Religion, and to persuade and engage us to the Practice of it. They are indeed capable of making us *wise unto Salvation*. *But how shall this great End be answered, if we do not frequently and seriously peruse them? How shall our Minds be enriched with the most important Knowledge, if we neglect the Fountain, from which it springs? How shall we be led to keep God's Commandments, (which are *holy, just, and good*,) unless we consult those *sacred Oracles*, which contain *the perfect Will of God*, together with all the Motives, that ought to influence us, as rational Creatures, to strict Obedience?

*Wherever this Mark occurs, I have borrow'd a short Passage from the worthy Mr. Nelson's Book, entitled, "The Practice of true Devotion."

God, in His infinite Wisdom and unbounded Goodness, hath been pleased to supply Men with the Revelation of His Will. He inspired the Prophets and Apostles; and providentially ordained that their Writings should be preserved: that the Truth might remain more sure, than if it had passed down to Posterity by *Tradition* only. And, as they are the Manifestation of *His* Will, who in all His Dispensations intends the Happiness of His Creatures, and perfectly knows by what Means their Happiness may be accomplished, we are bound to consider them as an invaluable Treasure.

The Neglect of reading the holy Scriptures, as it is the Cause of that shameful Ignorance, which is found amongst many Christians, so doth it certainly lead to that Corruptness of Principles and Practice, which prevails in the World. To this we must attribute the Growth of those deceitful Maxims, with which the worldly-minded, and they, that wallow in the Brutishness of Intemperance and Sensuality, encourage and harden themselves. And chiefly to the same Cause may be assigned the

Spreading of every impious, as well as every superstitious or enthusiastic Notion. For, as soon as we forsake that Guide, which God hath judged necessary for us, we must inevitably go astray. As soon as we presumptuously quit the sacred Light of God's Word, we fall into a thousand Dangers.

Whoever is sincerely desirous of finding *the Way, that leads to everlasting Life*, will be diligent in reading the holy Scriptures. For therein is *the Way of Life* so plainly pointed out, that every well-meaning Person may receive full Instruction in whatever is necessary for the obtaining of Salvation. And, to relieve us from all Fear of mistaking the Will of God, our Saviour expressly tells us, that *he, who is willing to do his heavenly Father's Will, shall know of the Doctrine, whether it be of God.*

It is manifest to common Observation, that the Capacity of some Persons is much inferior to that of others. Nature has not allowed the same Brightness of Understanding to all. But it is the peculiar Character of the holy

Scriptures, that they are suited to all Capacities.—Those Truths and Doctrines, which are necessary to be known, are delivered in so plain and simple a Manner, that a Christian of the meanest Understanding, if he has but an honest Heart, may very soon make himself acquainted with them.

All Persons have not the same Time and Opportunity of reading. Some Men's Condition of Life lays them under a Necessity of more constant Attention to worldly Business than that of others. But, (generally speaking,) all Christians may find Time enough for this Employment, if they please:—much more indeed than they commonly are disposed to make Use of.

If Men were more acquainted with the Contents of the Bible, (especially the New Testament) they would be better prepared for edifying by the public Service of the Church, and for receiving useful Instruction and Admonition from Sermons. In short, frequent reading of the Scriptures is absolutely necessary for keeping up a Sense of Religion,

and a Spirit of Devotion towards God. They, who neglect it, will unavoidably sink into an Indifference and Disrelish of holy Things: which will soon be followed by the Neglect of many Duties, and a slavish Subjection to worldly Passions.

Although reading the holy Scriptures is the most excellent Means of Instruction and Edification, yet it must be owned that some Persons read them, who reap little or no Advantage therefrom. But this may easily be accounted for: and needs not be any Discouragement to those, who are sincerely desirous of improving themselves. And one may reasonably hope, that many, who come at first with a Degree of Indifference truly unworthy of those *living Waters*, will in Time be affected with a proper Sense of their Importance, and receive more and more Benefit and †Comfort from them.

In Order to reap that Benefit, which God designed us, from the Use of the holy Scriptures, it is necessary that we *read with an

† 1. Thessalonians iv. 16. 17, 18.

intire Submission of our Judgment to whatever He hath been pleased to reveal. *Being convinced that the Revelation comes from God, we are bound to embrace every Doctrine and every Precept contained therein. *We must not put a forced Interpretation upon Scripture, for the Sake of making it agree with our pre-conceived Opinions; but must rectify our Notions according to the Dictates of that Wisdom, which is infallible. Neither must we set up our favourite Inclinations in Opposition to any of the Precepts it contains: though we, short-sighted Mortals, comprehend not in some Instances the Reasonableness thereof. Helpless and ignorant as we are, at the best, it surely becomes us to trust in His Wisdom and Goodness, who is too perfect ever to deceive or to be deceived.

We certainly ought to read the Scriptures with the greatest Reverence, and with peculiar Attention. *Some Persons are weak enough to imagine that they do a very commendable Thing, when they read a great many Chapters: although they go through them with so little Thought and Reflection, as really to receive

neither Admonition nor Instruction. If our Minds were duly impressed with the Idea, “that it is God almighty Himself, who speaks “to us in the holy Scriptures, proclaiming “His Divine Commands, and declaring that “the most magnificent and rich Reward, or the “most dreadful Punishment, shall be the Con- “sequence of our Obedience or Disobedience,” it is easy to conceive how happy an Effect such a reverential Awe would have upon us, whenever we read or heard or thought of any Part of the sacred Volume. —*If an earthly Prince condescended to discourse with us, we should not presume to affront his Dignity by a disrespectful Inattention. *But how much greater an Affront is it to the almighty Creator, who is *King of Kings, and Lord of Lords*, when we receive the Words of His Instruction in a careless and negligent Manner!

*We must read with a sincere Purpose of practising whatsoever we find to be the Will of our heavenly Father. *For the holy Scriptures are not designed to fill our Heads with vain Knowledge, but to enlarge our Minds, and improve our Hearts. They are calculated

to give us a just Idea of God and of ourselves. They are appointed to be a Rule and Guide for the Conduct of our Lives. And they encourage us in well-doing by the gracious Promise of Divine Help and Favour in the present Life, and the Prospect of a glorious and eternal Reward hereafter.

Two of the Apostles (St. Peter and St. James) have expressly told us, that *God resisteth the proud, but giveth Grace to the humble.* The royal Psalmist also declareth, that *God will guide the meek in Judgment, and teach them in His Way.* A Temper of Meekness and Humility is always a teachable Temper. Our blessed Saviour well knew that this was the very Soil adapted for receiving the good Seed, and bringing forth Fruit abundantly. Therefore he was perpetually endeavouring to establish this Disposition in his Disciples. He not only exhibited in himself the most wonderful Pattern of Humility, but repeatedly called on them to observe and imitate his Example in that Particular. It was the Want of this Temper of Mind, that led so many of the Jews to reject *the Words of eternal Life,*

even from the Mouth of *him*, who not only *spake as never Man spake*, but also confirmed the Divine Authority, by which he taught, *with Miracles and Signs from Heaven*.—Their Hearts and Minds were so perverse, that, *hearing, they were as if they had not heard, and, seeing, as if they had not seen*. But “blessed
“are the Ears, which are prepared to hear;
“and the Eyes, which are open to receive the
“Light.”

The Scriptures abound with the most excellent Rules and Precepts for our Conduct in every Condition of Life, and every Circumstance, that can occur. Whoever reads them with a sincere Desire to improve thereby, will assuredly find both Admonitions and Instructions truly applicable to himself.—These should be carefully treasured up in the Store-house of the Mind, and made the Subject of repeated Meditation and Reflection.—They should be retained as the choicest Treasure. For they will be found *the most delightful Counsellors*; † a present Help in Time of Need; a sure Comfort in Distress; a Safeguard and Protection in every Danger. Great indeed would be the

† Psalm cxix. 24

Advantage of entering upon the several Employments, and meeting the various Scenes and accidental Circumstances of Life, “thus prepared to recollect, as Occasion required, the heavy Threatenings denounced against every Vice; and the rich Promises held out, to encourage Perseverance in the Path of Duty to our heavenly Father.”

Lastly—We must pray to God for the continual Assistance of His Grace.† We must earnestly beseech Him to give a Blessing to our Reading: that, *as the Rain cometh down and the Snow from Heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the Earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, so the Word, that cometh forth from the Mouth of God, may not return unto Him void, but accomplish that, which is pleasing to Him, and prosper in the Thing, whereto He sent it.*‡ If we neglect to do this, we have great Reason to fear that our sinful Prejudices may interpose, and hide from the Eyes of our Understanding the precious Instruction of God’s Laws; or that the Temptations of the World

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† Luke xi. 13. 2 Cor. xii. 9. James i. 5. and iv. 6. Heb. iv. 16.

‡ Isaiah lv. 11.

may overpower and choke *the Seed sown in our Hearts*, and prevent us bringing any Fruit to Perfection.

To conclude. We behold in the holy Scriptures a Rule of Life the most complete in every Respect, that the World ever saw : such indeed, as would, if universally practised, almost change the Race of Men into a Society of Angels upon Earth. To animate our Endeavours, we are presented with many bright Examples of our Fellow-creatures, wherein we see displayed at once both the Amiability, and Practicableness of Virtue. In the Person of Jesus Christ we have a perfect Example of every Virtue.—In him we see “how beautiful is Holiness,” and “how lovely and glorious human Nature is, when adorned with Goodness.” We are commanded to follow his Steps:—to imitate his Piety, Humility and Charity. And, that we may not despair of Success, we have the Promise of Divine Assistance to forward our sincere Endeavours. In short, no Argument nor Motive is omitted, that could contribute to lead us to the steady Practice of Virtue. Our Hopes are excited by the unspeakable Advan-

tages of the Almighty's Favour; and our Fears are alarmed with the dreadful Threatnings of that Vengeance, which none can escape. Such amazing Promises, and such awful Threatnings, delivered with that majestic Plainness and Simplicity, as we find them in the holy Scriptures, and grounded upon the sacred Authority of "the great Teacher sent from God," can scarcely fail to awaken all, who read them with Attention, into a just Sense of the Importance of a virtuous Life, and the Danger of any sinful Course, any Habit of Transgression or Omission of our Duty. A Person, who is duly conversant in the Scriptures, will there behold his own Picture,—the true Image of his Soul. He will see as well what he is, as what he ought to be; and will feel the most powerful Incitement to correct and amend whatever is defective in his Principles and Practice. As he studies those *lively Oracles* with devout Attention and Care, his Life will by Degrees become a faithful Transcript of what he reads.—And, keeping his heavenly Guide continually in Sight, he will go on with increasing Comfort and Alacrity, till he arrives at the Place of *eternal Rest, eternal Happiness and Glory*.

PSALM xxix. 2.

*Give the Lord the Honour due unto His Name :
worship the Lord with holy Worship.*

THE public Worship of the Almighty is so indispensable a Duty on the holy Sabbath, that, whoever is resolutely determined to neglect *that*, must be supposed very unlikely to bestow much Thought upon the other Duties, which the Nature of this Day points out.—Wherefore I purpose to address only those, who consider themselves as being strictly obliged “to attend the weekly Service of the Church.”

When we assemble and meet together in the House of God, to render Thanks for the great Benefits we have received at His Hands, to set forth His most worthy Praise, to hear His most holy Word, and to pray for those Things, which are needful both for our Souls and Bodies, we become instrumental in edifying each other “by thus publicly honouring “the Almighty.” And every devout Worshipper will receive an Impression “calculated

“to increase his Veneration and Gratitude towards his heavenly Father, and his Affection for His Service.” If then we are desirous that this Impression should remain, and have its proper Effect, we shall not satisfy ourselves with devoting only the Hours of public Worship to the Remembrance of God, and passing the Remainder of the Day in thoughtless Indolence, or luxurious Indulgence. On the contrary we shall dedicate the chief Part of it to such Reflection, Reading, and devout Exercise of the Mind, as are adapted to correct our evil Inclinations, and prepare us for a faithful Discharge of all the Duties of Life.

We come far short of the gracious Design of the holy Sabbath, if, when our Bodies are at Rest from their usual Labour, when we desist from our worldly Occupations, and forbear transacting the Business of common Days, our Minds are still employed on temporal Concerns, and our Affections engaged upon the Treasures of the Earth. Diligent Reading of *the holy Scriptures* will furnish us with better Thoughts. It will hold up to our View such Things, as are well deserving of our Attention,

and most proper to employ our Minds on this distinguished Day. It will remind us of the noble Purpose, for which we are sent into the World: namely, to prepare ourselves by the steady Practice of Virtue for the Enjoyment of compleat and everlasting Happiness. *It will make us acquainted with our God.* It will show us both the Greatness and the Goodness of our heavenly Father. It will teach us to love Him, who first loved us; and thereby lead us to pay a willing Obedience to His Laws, and to worship Him in the Beauty of a holy and good Life.†

A Habit of Self-deceit, is the greatest of all Dangers. Some Persons (unwilling as they are to be deceived in temporal Matters) take Pains to deceive themselves in those Things, which are of infinitely greater Importance. And many, who are by no Means guilty of wilful Self-deceit, are in Danger of thinking much too favourably of themselves, from the Neglect of a careful Inspection into their own Conduct. Many important Duties may be neglected, disregarded, and in Time absolutely forgotten; and many highly criminal Trans-

† Psalm xcvi. 9.

gressions of God's Laws may become habitual, fixed, and rooted in us, through the Neglect of duly *calling our Ways to Remembrance*. It is very necessary therefore that we should frequently examine ourselves; that we should consider well the Disposition of our Hearts; review our Manner of Life; maturely resolve, with God's Help, to reform our evil Practices: and faithfully endeavour to make every Part of our Conduct and Behaviour conformable to the holy Will of God.

Wherewith (saith the Psalmist) shall a young Man cleanse his Way? Even by ruling himself after thy Word. Numerous and forcible are the Admonitions and Instructions of holy Scripture expressly addressed to young Men. But Youth is apt to be impatient of Control, and unwilling to submit to any Restraint whatever. In vain is the awful Authority of God's Word placed before their Eyes, when once they are engaged in the deceitful Ways of Sin. Seldom can the most earnest Persuasion of the kindest Friend, or the judicious Admonition of the wisest Counsellor, prevail so far as to check the licentious Enormities of Vice, when

once begun. To such however, as have hitherto been happily preserved from wicked Courses, I would offer the needful Caution, "not to trust too confidently in their own Strength." As the Apostle saith, *Let him, that thinketh he standeth, take Heed, lest he fall.* I wish them to be aware, that many sharp Trials of their Integrity may be yet to come. On which Account it behoves them to be very diligent in laying such a firm Foundation of religious Principles, as shall enable them to overcome the various Temptations, to which their future Situation or Condition in Life may expose them. If, by the Advantage of early Discipline and Instruction, they have hitherto escaped the Contagion of Vice, let them *now* begin to think and reflect *for themselves.* Let them look forward to the Difficulties, which probably await them; and fortify themselves with *the powerful Defence of Christian Belief and Hope*: humbly praying to God, that He would enlighten their Understandings, and strengthen their Hearts. For, unless they are duly prepared against Temptation, there is great Danger that their Virtue and their Happiness may suffer Shipwreck in the first Tempest, that overtakes them.

Parents and Masters of Families are indispensably bound to see to the regular Conduct and proper Behaviour of all those, over whom they have Authority;—to supply them with the best Means of Instruction in their Duty to God and to their Fellow-creatures;—attentively to promote their making a right Use of this *holy* Day; and most carefully to avoid every Appearance of Inconsistency in their own Example.

This Day, separated as it is from common Uses by the Appointment of God Himself, affords so excellent an Opportunity of attending to our spiritual Concerns, (compared with which we well know that all worldly Considerations are utterly insignificant and despicable), that it must be unreasonable in the highest Degree to forbear applying it to that unspeakably important Purpose. If we will not be persuaded to employ the Sabbath in that Way, in which the very Character of the Day itself, and the public Worship of God, naturally remind us that we ought to employ it, “when
“shall the necessary Study and Preparation
“for the proper Discharge of our Duty take

"Place?" "When shall we find Time for it?"
 "Is it likely ever to be done?" The holy
 Scripture expressly directs us *to prepare our
 Hearts against Temptation.* If we are too in-
 dolent and careless to do this, what is to pro-
 tect us in the Day of Trial? What is to
 prevent our running headlong into the Snares
 of Wickedness? If we suffer *the Lord's Day* to
 pass without Improvement, what is to support
 and guard us in the Course of the Week?
 On this Day our Saviour Christ was raised
 from the dead, and became *the first Fruits*
of them, that slept in the Grave. Wherefore
 on this Day no Employment of our Minds
 can be more suitable, than "to contemplate
 "on the Life and Death and Resurrection
 "of Jesus Christ." He was the living and
 true Pattern of all Goodness. He gave us
 an Example in himself; and commanded
 us to imitate his Virtues. *He died for us:*
and rose again; and (as he himself declared)
is gone before, to prepare a Place for us.
 And he will come again at the End of the
 World; and will receive into his everlasting
 Kingdom every one, who hath loved and obey-
 ed the Truth.

If we were once accustomed to employ this Day agreeably to the gracious Intention of our heavenly Father,—that is, for the Purposes of Instruction, Edification, and Improvement, we should not find it changed (as some may apprehend) into a Day of Dulness and Melancholy. On the contrary, it would soon become the chearfullest, as well as the most interesting of all Days. The very great Advantages arising from a prudent and laudable Application of it to its proper Uses would not only enliven the Day itself, but its kindly Influence on the whole of our Time would be productive of a Satisfaction far exceeding all others:—the Satisfaction of living as it becomes rational Creatures to live, and of conducting ourselves suitably to our high and glorious Destination: *being created in the Image of God, and made to be immortal.*

Our Affections being too much set upon earthly Treasures, is the chief Cause of Life being spent so unprofitably, and so inconsistently with the Design of our Creation, as it is indeed by many. The proper Employment of the Sabbath would prevent this in-

glorious Attachment to the perishable Things of this World, by exalting our Views, and making those Things, which are of infinitely greater Importance, familiar to our Minds. Surely the firm and settled Apprehension that we are designed *to live with God for ever* in a State of unspeakable Happiness and Glory, cannot long be present to our Minds, without exciting in us an ardent Desire to obtain that End, and a vigorous Resolution *to strive for such a Prize*. And, when once we are heartily “engaged in this Pursuit,” the Temptations of the World will not easily seduce us from it. For “no other Prudence nor Care can so effectually guard us, as the being actually employed in the Performance of our Duty.”

Extract

FROM A SERMON ON PRAYER

BY THE REV. S. BOURN.

IT is not only the Duty, but the Delight of a good Man, to pray to his heavenly Father.

But it cannot be either the *Delight* or the *Duty* of him, who is resolutely determined to

persist in Wickedness. For in such a Case to pretend to pray to God would be no better than hardened Presumption and most insolent Mockery. *The Prayer of the wicked* (saith Solomon) *is an Abomination to the Lord.*—The more a bad Man pretends to be religious, he is only the more audacious and incorrigible Hypocrite.

All wicked Persons should consider themselves as being excluded from the Presence of the Deity, and forbidden to offer up either Prayers or Praises, so long as they continue impenitent. But, if any one, who hath lived in a Course of Sin, is awakened to a proper Sense of his Folly and Guilt, and sincerely repents;—if he is willing to strive and labour to subdue his vicious Habits, and to undo, as much as possible, the Evil, which he hath done; he may then address the infinite Majesty of the God of Heaven with reasonable Hopes of Acceptance; and will soon experience the Comfort and Satisfaction arising from sincere and humble Prayer.

When we consider our defenceless State, surrounded as we are with innumerable Dangers, liable to Errors Faults Misfortunes and every Kind of Evil, how happy a Privilege

ought we to esteem it, that we are permitted to apply for *Help from above* ! If then a *Creature* stubbornly refuses to pay Homage to his *Creator* ; if a dependent Being is too proud to *acknowledge* his Dependence ; if a weak and indigent Subject is unwilling to ask for Protection and Support from an all-powerful wise and good Sovereign, who is so condescending kind and gracious, as to call himself *our Father* ; if a *Sinner* will not submit to entreat Forgiveness from that almighty Being, whose Authority he hath disowned, whose Wisdom Goodness and Mercy he hath despised and insulted ;—are not all these Suppositions so many glaring Inconsistencies, and Contradictions to our reasonable Nature ? We know not what shall be on the Morrow ;—what a Day or an Hour may bring forth. We know not what Dangers or Difficulties are waiting to meet us ;—what Afflictions and Trials we are soon to pass through. And we are certain, after a few revolving Years, to quit this earthly Habitation, and pass into another State, which shall last for ever.—Then, if we really believe that there is a supreme Governor, who hath not only the Power but the Will also to make us safe and happy

both in this World, and in that, which is to come; who actually hath commanded us to pray to Him for the Supply of all our Wants; what Perverſeneſs and Ingratitude muſt it imply, if we reſuſe to make Application to that gracious Being! *O come, let us worſhip and fall down, (ſaith the Pſalmiſt) and kneel before the Lord our Maker. For He is the Lord our God; and we are the People of His Paſture, and the Sheep of His Hand.* From Him alone all Strength Support and Comfort and every good Gift muſt come.

The more we are accuſtomed to ſincere and earneſt Prayer, the more will our Minds be familiariſed to a ſteady Apprehenſion of God's providential Care, and confirmed in a rational and moſt happy *Truſt in Him*. Being habituated to the Contemplation of that amazing Power, which actuates univerſal Nature, and ſuſtaineth every Creature, that exiſts, we ſhall learn to fix our Dependence on God alone, and "to know no other Fear, but that of offending Him." Whiſt we keep in View the inexhauſtible Goodneſs of the Almighty; that diffuſive Bounty, which enriches all Man-

kind with innumerable Gifts and Blessings; when we consider also the invaluable Offers of Divine Grace and Mercy in the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and those unspeakably glorious Effects of the Creator's Goodness, which we may obtain the everlasting Enjoyment of; we shall be prepared to *cast all our Care on God*: and shall be in the Way to experience (even in the present Life) *that Peace of God, which passeth all Understanding.*

MORNING PRAYERS.

O GOD, who hast prepared for them, that love thee, such good Things, as even surpass Man's Understanding, pour into our Hearts such Gratitude towards thee, that, loving thee above all Things, we may obtain thy heavenly Promises, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

BLESSED Lord, who hast caused all holy Scriptures to be written for our Learning, grant that we may in such-wise hear them,

read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that by Patience, and Comfort, of thy holy Word, we may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed Hope of everlasting Life, which thou hast given us in our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

O GOD, the Creator and Preserver of all Mankind, we humbly beseech thee for all Sorts and Conditions of Men, that thou wouldest be pleased to make thy Ways known unto them, thy saving Health unto all Nations. More especially we pray for the good Estate of the catholic Church: that it may be so guided and governed by thy good Spirit, that all, who profess and call themselves Christians, may be led into the Way of Truth, and hold the Faith in Unity of Spirit, in the Bond of Peace, and in Righteousness of Life. Finally, we commend to thy fatherly Goodness all those, who are any Ways afflicted or distressed in Mind Body or Estate: that it may please thee to comfort and relieve them, according to their several Necessities; giving them Patience under their Sufferings, and a happy Issue out of all their Afflictions. And this we beg for Jesus Christ's Sake. Amen.

ALMIGHTY God, who alone canst order the unruly Wills and Affections of sinful Men, grant to us, we beseech thee, the Assistance of thy holy Spirit, that we may subdue all our corrupt Inclinations, and utterly abandon every evil Way. Give us Grace to purify our Hearts from all inordinate Desires; from sensual Passions; from Envy Hatred and Malice; from Falshood and Injustice; from Pride and Discontent. Preserve us from the Dangers of an indolent Mind; from the Waste of precious Time; from all Ingratitude, Selfishness and Inhumanity. Grant that all our Thoughts and Designs, and the whole Tenour of our Conduct, may be more and more conformable to thy blessed Will: that we may honour and obey thee, O heavenly Father, as we ought to do; and may finally obtain thy glorious Rewards, through Jesus Christ our Saviour. Amen.

ALMIGHTY and everlasting God, give unto us the Increase of Faith Hope and Charity: and, that we may obtain thy heavenly Promises, make us to love all thy Commandments, for Jesus Christ's Sake our Lord, Amen.

OUR Father, which art in Heaven, hallowed be thy Name. Thy Kingdom come. Thy Will be done on Earth, as it is in Heaven. Give us this Day our daily Bread. And forgive us our Trespases, as we forgive them, that trespass against us. And lead us not into Temptation, but deliver us from Evil. For thine is the Kingdom, and the Power, and the Glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

EVENING PRAYERS.

ALMIGHTY God, give us Grace, that we may cast away the Works of Darknes, and walk by the blessed Light of the Gospel of thy Son: that, in the last Day, when he shall come again in his glorious Majesty, to judge both the quick and the dead, we may be crowned with the joyful Sentence of Approbation, and be received into his everlasting Kingdom. Grant this, O Lord, for Jesus Christ's Sake. Amen.

ALMIGHTY everlasting God, mercifully look upon our Infirmities; and in all our Dangers and Necessities stretch forth thy Hand, to help and defend us, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

LORD of all Power and Might, who art the Author and Giver of all good Things, graft in our Hearts the Love of thy Name; increase in us true Religion; nourish us with all Goodness: and of thy great Mercy keep us in the same through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

O Almighty God, our heavenly Father, we humbly adore thee as the Maker and Governor of the World, the Author of our Being, the Preserver of our Lives, and the Giver of every good Thing. We bless thee for thy abundant Kindness and Mercy, for all the Comforts and Blessings we experience in the present Life; and much more for the glorious Prospect of immortal Happiness in the Life hereafter. Assist us with thy Grace, O Lord, that we may become daily more and more obedient to thy holy Will. Incline our Hearts to all good Ways. Grant that we may be strictly true and just in all our Dealings; humane, compassionate, and kind to all Creatures; faithful and diligent in the Discharge of all the Duties of that Condition, in which thou hast seen good to place us. Assist us in raising

our Affections above the vain Treasures of the World. Give us true Wisdom: that we may be fully resigned to thy righteous Dispensations, and by the Exercise of Patience and Humility may prepare ourselves for that everlasting State of Happiness, for which we were created. Accept our Prayers, O merciful Father, for Jesus Christ's Sake. Amen.

ALmighty God, unto whom all Hearts are open, all Desires known, and from whom no Secrets are hid, cleanse the Thoughts of our Hearts by the Inspiration of thy holy Spirit: that we may perfectly love thee, and worthily magnify thy holy Name, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

OUR Father, which art in Heaven, hallowed be thy Name. Thy Kingdom come. Thy Will be done on Earth, as it is in Heaven. Give us each Day our daily Bread. And forgive us our Trespases, as we forgive them, that trespass against us. And lead us not into Temptation: but deliver us from Evil. For thine is the Kingdom, and the Power, and the Glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

A PRAYER FOR SUNDAY MORNING.

ALMIGHTY God, our heavenly Father, to whose Honour this Day of holy Rest is dedicated, give us Grace, we beseech thee, so to observe and keep it, that it may be to us the Beginning of a happy Week spent in thy Service. Mercifully grant that our public Attendance *in thy House of Prayer* may be the Means of confirming ourselves in holy Purposes and virtuous Resolutions, as well as instrumental to the Edifying of others: so that the Uprightness of our Conduct and Behaviour may prove the Sincerity of our Professions; and we may “shew forth thy Praise, not only “with our Lips, but in our Lives.” Teach us to consider duly, that this World is not our proper Home. And kindly prompt us to make no Delay of preparing ourselves for the everlasting Life, which is to come. Assist us with thy Grace, O Lord, that we may so diligently apply ourselves to the Performance of every Duty, that, when we are summoned to the great Day of Account, we may appear before our Judge without Dismay and Terror:—that we may be acknowledged as the faithful Servants of Jesus Christ; and may be received into his glorious Kingdom, *to live with him for ever.* Amen.

BLESSED Lord, who hast caused all holy Scriptures to be written for our Learning, grant that we may in such-wise hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that "by "Patience, and Comfort of thy holy Word," we may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed Hope of everlasting Life, which thou hast given us in our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

An Admonition.

WHEN we pray to the Almighty for His Blessing and Protection, for the Forgiveness of our Sins, and the merciful Guidance of His holy Spirit, it is indispensably requisite that our Manner and Deportment should be in all Respects expressive of the greatest Humility. If our private Devotions are performed with such Thoughtfulness and deep Attention, as are suitable to the high Importance and unspeakable Value of those Mercies and Blessings, for which we are encouraged to pray to our heavenly Father, we not only have the comfortable Hope that

our Prayers will be accepted, but also experience an Impression upon our Minds, likely to produce a happy Influence on our Conduct. And, when we unite with our Fellow-christians in the public Assembly, to praise God for His infinite Goodness, to acknowledge our Unworthiness of His most bountiful Kindness, and to pray for His merciful Guidance and Protection both for ourselves and for each other, do we not desire to promote a general Spirit of Religion, and to be instrumental to our Neighbour's Edification?

But, if we go through our private Devotions with almost the same Unfeelingness and Want of Thought, as if we were quite indifferent about the Event of our Prayers, we shall be more likely to offend the Almighty, than to obtain His Help and Favour. And, if the Manner of our public Worship be so defective, as to carry the Appearance rather of wilful Disrespect and Profaneness, than of any sincere Desire to honour God in the Sight of each other; then, instead of mutual Edification, it will be apt to produce a contrary Effect, and to encourage Levity and Irreverence, if not Contempt. The

humble Posture of *kneeling* is frequently noticed in Scripture, as a proper Token of Humility, when we pray to God. In private Prayer, and in Family Prayer, that becoming Posture is (I believe) very seldom neglected. But in the public Church, where the strictest Attention should certainly be paid to a reverent and truly humble Demeanour, it is the constant Practice of many Persons to offer up the most serious Acknowledgements of their Unworthiness of God almighty's Favour, and the most earnest Petitions for His Mercy and Forgiveness, in a Posture more expressive of careless Indolence or wilful Indifference, than of Reverence and Humiliation.

There is so much Inconsistency and Presumption in this Behaviour, as cannot but offend and distress every thoughtful Christian. And the *conscientious* must feel themselves in some Degree *obliged* to show a serious Disapprobation.

By the same Editor

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